



Peace on Earth
Luke 2:8-14
December 23, 2018

The angel announced good news of great joy, namely, that a Savior had been born, and that he is the Messiah, the Lord. The appropriate response is glory to God and the expected result is peace on earth (Luke 2:14).

But we don't see peace in many places on earth, including the very place where the angel spoke these words. Currently, there is also a pretty serious rift in our own nation. Many of us have tense or conflicted relationships as well. Is there anything we can do? Can there be peace in Jesus' name?

Jesus knew his message would divide people (Matthew 10:34). Still, he wants peace and calls us to be peacemakers (Matthew 5:9). We won't be able to do so if we are alienated in our primary relationship or anxious in our private lives. So we must first make peace with God (Romans 5:1; Colossians 1:19-20) and then assimilate his peace into our hearts (Luke 14:27; 16:33; Philippians 4:6-7). Then we can be peacemakers. But what kind of peacemaker does he want us to be? The word can refer to:

1. A handgun. This is not really peace. It is force, coercion and control. It is the way of Herod, Rome, the barrier wall, raising our voices, talking people down, etc.
2. A conflict-avoider. This is not peace either. It is compliance or concession, usually to someone taking the power approach (#1). Jesus did not want us to withdraw from with others, associate only with people who agree with

us, or refuse to voice our true thoughts and feelings. How can we all "submit to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Ephesians 5:21) if some of us never even say what we think? Jesus came to bring us together as one (Ephesians 2:15), but the like-mindedness he desires (Philippians 2:2) is not uniformity. Rather, it is humility (Philippians 2:3-8; Ephesians 4:2) and a focus on the central truths of the gospel (Ephesians 4:4-5). Besides, if we refuse to voice our thoughts and feelings we not only put hearts in danger of resentment and bitterness, we also cheat others out of the things God has taught us and the opportunity to grow.

3. One who has peace with God, has assimilated that peace into their own hearts, and through godly qualities and practices is able to have real peace in their own relationships as well as restoring peace to others'. Some of those key qualities and practices are:
 - a. Placing a priority on peace (Ephesians 4:3). Many of us make every effort to say our peace but make almost no effort to build authentic peace in our relationships. Yet God is called the God of peace at least seven times (Philippians 4:9). Peace is a priority to Him (Matthew 5:9; Romans 14:17; Galatians 5:22; Colossians 3:15).
 - b. Allowing God to develop healthy thinking and emotions in you (email me for MERCY acronym).
 - c. Forgive, from the heart (Matthew 18:35). If you say you forgive someone because you know you're supposed to but you hold a grudge or bitterness, you haven't forgiven them. If you can truly drop a matter, that's great (Proverbs 19:11; Colossians 3:13), but if you are still talking about it, you haven't forgiven (Proverbs 17:9).
 - d. Talk directly to the person you are struggling with, no matter who is at fault (Matthew 5:23-24; 18:15ff.; cf. Galatians 6:1).

